EFA 2000

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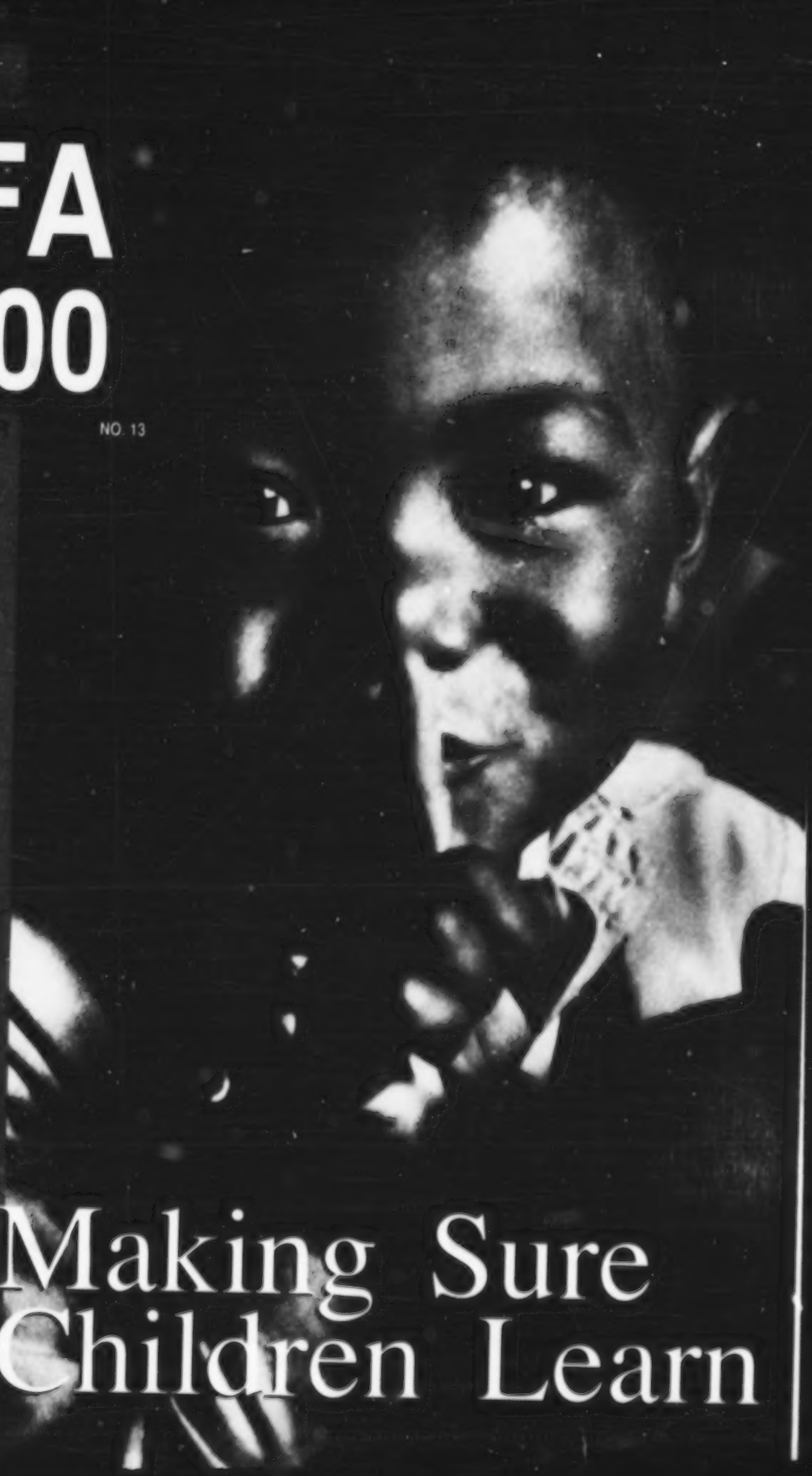
FOCUS
EDUCATION
FOR ALL
FORUM



Making Sure Children Learn

New approaches needed by governments and donors.

OPINION

The situation of basic education in the poorest countries is worrying. Gains made in the 1960s and 1970s have eroded. The ability of adults to read and write is deteriorating, and the number of students who complete the primary school cycle is alarmingly low. New approaches are required by both governments and donors. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand 1990) was a serious attempt to turn the tide.

The review of progress made at the recent Education for All Forum in New Delhi (8-10 September, 1993) showed that the process has started in many countries and also within many donor agencies. Serious problems, however, remain in the poorest countries. The fact that progress has been made worldwide must not make us forget that problems remain, structural, financial, as well as pedagogical.

One of the most important factors hampering progress is that salaries and working conditions of teachers continue to worsen in many places. One result is that teachers offer private lessons outside school hours in order to survive. This creates a vicious circle. The worse the conditions in school, the bigger the demand for private lessons. Therefore, it is imperative that the incentives for teachers be changed.

It is high time to widen the traditional discourse on the quality of education. When teachers can no longer live on their salary and the institutional base has weakened, it is not enough to look at traditional measures in the pedagogical domaine, such as improvement of teacher training and more relevant curricula. Education for All has to be addressed within a broader reform perspective. The success of EFA is linked to and dependent upon wider issues such as general *Civil Service Reform* and the strengthening of the institutional base. That's why well coordinated and long-term efforts that address the overall financial problems at the same time as they strengthen the institutions ought to be the goals and cornerstones of donor support.

The mechanism established by the Indian government in co-operation with the World Bank and the European Community is a move in this direction. The support that the Swedish donor agency SIDA is giving to the Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish projects in Rajastan, India points towards the creation of new partnerships and new institutional structures. The discussion has to go beyond the agenda of the EFA Forum in New Delhi. Such structural and financial reforms can only suceed if part of a reform process which has political support in the countries concerned. This was very clear at Jomtien. It is important that the Forum pays more attention to such issues.

Otherwise EFA may disappear from the international agenda and that of individual countries. In truth, unless the necessary reforms have the backing of the countries and are "owned" by them, there is little that donor agencies can do.

Ingemar Gustafsson, *Head of Education Division at the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA).*
Lennart Wohlgemuth, *Director of the Scandinavian Institute for African Studies*

Heard at the EFA Forum...

●●● *The most important message of the Forum [...] is that the international community, the multilateral and bilateral agencies should adopt a broader and more holistic perspective of education. They should assist developing countries in innovating, experimenting and trying out a variety of alternative models of education in a manner that facilitates national capacity building.*

S. V. Giri, education secretary, India

●●● *Current events demonstrate all too clearly that basic education for the human race must include also those elements that foster tolerance, democratic behaviour, respect for human rights and dignity. These are essentials that cannot be postponed to higher education, nor even to secondary education.*

Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO

●●● *Mass media represent, perhaps, the single most under-utilized resource for improving education in all the countries of the world [...] Teachers have not been trained to use media effectively, and education —unlike media —is slow to change. With informed guidance and leadership— and with close co-operation between educators and media makers — the world's new electronic information super highway can be harnessed to serve education.*

Pamela Michael, Media/Education task force director, U.S. Coalition for Education for All

●●● *If non-formal education is to improve its quality and play an effective role in the Education for All effort as a key element of a national universal primary education strategy, it must receive greater resources and support at all levels of the educational and administrative hierarchy.*

Rosa Maria Torres, education specialist, UNICEF

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EDUCATION FOR ALL FORUM

The Balance Sheet

THE GOALS OF **THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR ALL** ARE FINANCIALLY AND TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE, BUT GOVERNMENTS MUST ACCELERATE ACTION TO PROVE THAT THE COMMITMENTS MADE IN JOMTIEN, THAILAND, IN 1990 AMOUNT TO MORE THAN EMPTY TALK.

Photos: C. BARRY (left), O. VIDAL

This was one of the conclusions from the *Second International Consultative Forum on Education for All*, which met 8-10 September 1993 in New Delhi, India. A global watchdog, the Forum monitors progress towards the international goals of Education for All (EFA) and ensures that basic education remains high on the agenda of world leaders and donor agencies.

The meeting, which focused on the quality of basic education, was attended by some 75 senior policy-makers, development practitioners, educators, and media makers, together representing various partners in the worldwide EFA movement.

Presenting a review of progress made in the last three years, Mr. Victor Ordoñez, director of UNESCO's Basic Education Division, said that while major areas of the world have made substantial progress in universalizing primary education, many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, lag significantly behind.

There are still some 130 million children in the world with no access to schooling and UNESCO projections show that the number may grow to 162 million by the year 2000.

"Unless something dramatic is done to change the current trends, the absolute number of children out-of-school will grow in this decade", said Ordoñez.

However, the "overall efforts" towards Education for All have been positive. Over 100 countries have set EFA goals to be achieved by the turn of the century, and some countries, such as Bangladesh, Egypt and India which together account for one-third of the world's illiterates, have substantially increased their funding for basic education.

Aid from donor agencies has also increased since 1990, particularly by Scandinavian funding agencies. Sweden, for example, allocated last year 55 per cent of its total aid to education, which is more than any other donor country. In second place, the United States funneled over 40 per cent of its total aid to education.

Multilateral agencies have also made good on their promise to boost support to basic education after Jomtien. The World Bank has almost doubled its lending to basic education in the last three years, from about US$500 million in 1990 to US$1 billion in 1993. UNESCO, while not a funding agency, has doubled its re-

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EDUCATION FOR ALL FORUM

sources for literacy and primary education since 1990, and UNICEF plans to allocate 25 per cent of its total budget for basic education by 1995. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the principal coordinating funding agency within the UN system, doubled its expenditure on basic education between 1991 and 1992, and more than two-thirds of its approved country programmes for 1992-96 include funding to improve basic education.

Photo: O. VIDAL

But, warned Ordoñez, external aid for basic education "seems to have reached a plateau" and consequently developing countries need to define their needs more carefully and rely more on their own resources. "The time has come for many governments to shift more resources into basic education from other, less cost-effective investments outside the education sector. Readjustments within the education budgets alone will not provide sufficient resources for Education for All."

According to one study, the estimated annual additional global cost of providing a place in school for each child by the year 2000 is US$ 6 to 7 billion, a sum well within reach of the world community as a whole, particularly if the additional costs are offset by relatively minor reductions in military spending. The added cost per year would be equivalent to only two days' military expenditure by the industrialized countries or one week's military spending by developing nations.

But putting every child in school is not enough if the children do not learn what they will need to know to improve their lives and to continue learning beyond their schooling. Many Forum participants stressed that while great efforts have been made to universalize primary education, the quality of education has suffered (see article page 5).

For example, a recent UNESCO study of educational quality in China, India, Guinea and Mexico showed "alarming results" in school achievement among grade IV and V pupils. Less than 40 per cent of the pupils surveyed in urban areas had "attained mastery in language and less than 10 per cent in arithmetic". In rural areas the findings were even more disappointing.

Another finding by the Forum was that while governments have commited themselves to giving top priority to education for girls and women, too many countries have been slow to act. This impedes general educational quality, as children of an educated mother have a greater chance of survival, healthy growth, and propensity to learn. If the mother is educated, chances are greater that her children will be educated too.

While there are no "magic formulae" to achieve good quality education, the Forum underlined the value of early childhood education, innovative alternative approaches, media involvement and new partnerships in education.

A roundtable organized by the U.S. Coalition for Education for All examined how media representatives and educators can form effective partnerships in the pursuit of Education for All. Said Pamela Michael, media/education task force director: "No country on earth has effectively harnessed the power of media to assist in education. In most countries, no more than 5 per cent of broadcasting hours are devoted to education, the remaining 95 per cent are given over to entertainment, advertising and propaganda."

In another roundtable UNDP advocated the need to exchange information, experience and techniques among a range of different partners. Heli Perret, senior education advisor for UNDP, said that alliances should be developed more broadly than is now the case, among non-governmental organizations, the business community, local groups and the government to improve the quality of education. Their collective impact, she said, would be felt on basic education policy, planning, facilities, management, curriculum and pedagogy. ■

The Bottom Line

Some of the conclusions from the 1993 Forum:

The good news: 105 countries have set Education for All goals, and many have launched EFA action plans. The bad news: some 70 countries still need to get going.

Despite widespread agreement that basic education for girls and women is a top priority, few countries have taken concrete action.

Partnerships for EFA need to be developed more broadly than is now the case; the business community is still largely outside the EFA movement. The print and audiovisual media have mutual interest with educators to raise the educational level of the population. They can and must learn to work together using their relative strengths.

The estimated cost of providing EFA by the year 2000, an additional US$6 to 7 billion per year, is well within the reach of the world community as a whole, especially if the additional costs are offset by relatively minor reductions in military spending.

While external funding for basic education has increased in the past three years, it seems to have reached a "plateau". Therefore, developing countries should define their needs for aid more carefully and rely more on their own resources.

Sub-Saharan Africa requires particular support from the world community, without which Education for All will remain out of reach for most African countries.

THE FAILURE OF SCHOOLS:

Making sure children learn

Photo: C. BARRY

What's wrong with schooling? In one poor African country, the condition of education is described as follows: "Currently, the average teacher-pupil ratio is 1:70, and classes of over 100 children are not uncommon, especially in urban areas. On average, only 18 per cent of children have a chair on which to sit and 13 per cent a desk at which to work and little or no materials with which to learn."

In many countries in the world, this is the picture of what goes on in schools. While governments and donors alike recognize the importance of the problem of poor educational quality, not many have taken concrete action to do something about it. The Forum therefore took a hard look at the issue of quality education. "There is no great mystery about why schools succeed or fail in teaching their pupils", said a Forum document prepared by UNESCO. "A few obvious factors appear again and again as the probable explanation for what and why pupils learn or, in far too many cases, fail to do so: the curriculum, learning materials, instructional time, school supervision, the motivation and preparation of teachers and community support."

"What is needed is not adjustments here and there but far-reaching reform. The status of teachers has to be restored and their conditions of service improved."

An overloaded and irrelevant curriculum is the rule rather than exception in many countries, and in such circumstances it may be necessary to "teach less in order that pupils learn more". Another important factor is the availability of textbooks. In some developing countries, fewer than one pupil in five has a textbook. The evidence strongly suggests that the provision of textbooks to all school children would be the most cost effective investment that could be made in boosting achievement.

Learning begins at birth and much can be done to ensure succes in school before the child enters a class room. The Forum agreed that interventions in the early years of a child's life offer an extraordinary opportunity to avoid learning problems later in life. Therefore, by increasing the coverage of early childhood care, development and education programme, chances are better that children will start school ready to learn.

Perhaps the most important key to ensure that children really learn is the teacher. While improved teacher education and training is important, one participant called for an entirerly "new way of life for teachers". In many countries, salaries are not only low, but also irregularly paid. "What is needed", says UNESCO, "is not adjustments here and there but far-reaching reform. The status of teachers has to be restored and their conditions of service improved."

Most participants agreed: the overall responsibility for providing quality education for all is with governments. Said Mr. Manzoor Ahmed, UNICEF education specialist: "Governments have to assume a strong and pivotal role in universalizing primary education". But he, as well as many other participants, said that expanding conventional government-run schooling is not the only answer. They called for diversified and innovative approaches to primary education in which traditional indigenous education systems and non-formal programmes can play a useful, even essential role.

Such programmes have proven particularly valuable in reaching those children who may be left out of formal schooling. The greatest potential contribution of non-formal education lies in its possibilities to trigger change and innovation in the state school system. Said Mary Futrell, president of *Education International*: "Non-formal education must be linked with formal schooling, and not be allowed to be developed into a separate and unequal alternative."

Non-formal education however should not be seen as a cheap compensatory alternative to the regular formal schooling, operating against greater odds with untrained, underpaid and voluntary personnel. Said Rosa-Maria Torres, UNICEF: "If non-formal education is to improve its quality and play an effective role in the EFA effort as a key element of a national UPE strategy, it must receive greater resources and support at all levels of the educational and administrative hierarchy." ■

THE NEED FOR COURAGEOUS MEASURES

The second meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All, to which this issue is dedicated, showed the continuing need to advocate Education For All. As 1990 fades into the background and turnover takes its toll in parliaments, ministries and agencies, the message of Jomtien has to be reiterated and adapted to evolving conditions at country and international levels.

"Post–Jomtien" national governments are emerging in parts of Europe and Asia, and they need to be brought into the Jomtien consensus. New concerns and emergencies crowd onto the world's agenda, but in most if not all cases, basic education can be part of the strategy to deal with them. Its transversal utility and priority must constantly be stressed.

While some countries report having taken EFA initiatives after Jomtien, many others (including most of the industrialized countries) appear to have taken no steps and will need to be encouraged to rethink what EFA means in their context. Others, with EFA goals on paper, have yet to produce credible action plans with resources behind them. Given the short time horizon to the year 2000, any significant advance toward EFA will require imaginative and courageous measures to shift more resources into basic education and to focus them on strategic improvements and underserved groups.

Monitoring progress is an important and complex task, perhaps only marginally easier than making

The extent of the donor commity's actual and potential contribution is unclear. There seems to be more interest in EFA, but some donors say they receive few requests for aid to basic education. Yet some developing countries that have worked out EFA strategies wonder aloud "where are the donors to help us?" A better market place is needed to match demand with supply.

Finally, the Forum meeting demonstrated that monitoring progress toward EFA is an important and complex task, perhaps only marginally easier than *making* progress. Done well, however, monitoring and assessment of basic education at local and national levels can be a powerful means to improve its quality and establish its credibility and support among families, communities, employers and government.

At global level, we need good monitoring data to answer the question: Has Jomtien made a real difference, and if so, how? At present, one can find some data to support either an affirmative or a negative response, but much of the information needed for an objective assessment simply is not yet available. This will be a major focus of attention as we prepare for the mid-decade evaluation of progress toward EFA by governments and organizations.

Michael Lakin, *executive secretary, International Consultative Forum on Education for All*

UNESCO Awards International Literacy Prizes

Sabenta National Institute, Swaziland, the Indian National Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations, and the Ministry of Education, Jordan, have scooped the International Literacy Prizes, 1993.

The awards were presented by the Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, on 8 September, at a colourful International Literacy Day function in New Delhi, India, coinciding with the Second Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All.

Sabenta National Institute received the International Reading Association Literacy Award, and the Indian National Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations (INFUCA) the Noma Prize, which carry a purse of US$10,000 each, while the King Sejong Literacy Prize worth US$30,000 was awarded to the Jordanian Education Ministry's Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education project.

Ten other individuals, institutions and organizations were selected for Honourable Mentions and Recognitions.

Sabenta National Institute, a non-governmental organization, received the award for "having served as Swaziland's vehicle to implement its campaign to eradicate illiteracy and promote community development".

The INFUCA was selected for "having centered literacy education activities on raising awareness among underprivileged groups, in particular the Koragas, one of the poorest groups living in remote areas in southern India, conducting classes at six learning centres and providing lessons to Koraga women in their homes".

The Jordanian Education Ministry's project clinched the award for "gradually extending free compulsory education to children aged 6-16, thus bringing primary school enrolment up to 97 per cent by 1992[...] and enacting legislation to provide literacy and adult education centres".

The prizes, established by the International Reading Association, the late Japanese publisher Shoichi Noma and the Republic of Korea in 1979, 1980 and 1989 respectively, are awarded every year to individuals, institutions and organizations for "having distinguished themselves by making the particularly meritorious and effective contribution to the struggle against illiteracy".

BRIEFS

●● Asian street children educators gather in Manilla

Educators working with street children gathered in Manila for an intensive ten-day workshop to share ideas, identify successful strategies and prepare an action plan to boost training.

The workshop, held 1-12 September, drew 21 educators who work with street children in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines. They observed creative approaches in reaching street children, and learnt how to draw up effective lesson plans.

Alphonse Tay, programme specialist for UNESCO, challenged the participants to "be pioneers in the field of education and seek ways to bring flexibility to an education system characterized by rigidity".

The workshop was organized by UNESCO in co-operation with Childhope

●● A European call for Education for All

* Launch new efforts to promote democratic and humanistic values.
* Focus especially on the educational needs of minorities.
* Broaden the scope of vocational education to improve job perspectives and prevent unemployment.

These priority areas were identified during the first Education for All meeting in Europe, held in Warsaw, Poland, 6-8 September.

The meeting was attended by 150 participants from almost all countries in Eastern and Central Europe, representing governments, United Nations agencies, educators and non-governmental organizations.

Federico Mayor, UNESCO Director-General, said "Alliances between government authorities, private enterprises, parents, teachers, political parties, churches etc [...] are the key agents for improvement and reform".

In an era when East and Central European education systems need to be almost completely overhauled, participants said that progress depends ultimately upon governmental action, but with the active support by UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as the Council of Europe, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Community.

●● New booklet on educating children with disabilities

At least one child in ten is born with or acquires a serious impairment which, if no attention is given, could impede the child's development.

About 80 per cent of the estimated 200 million disabled children in the world are living in developing countries, and very few receive good health care and education. Fewer than 2 per cent receive special services of any kind.

In *Educating Children and Young People with Disabilities*, a new UNESCO document, Seamus Hegarty, the author, states: "To improve the situation will require time, but primarily

Photo: Roger/UNESCO

requires a commitment and a political will to bring about change –change of human attitudes and behaviour, the integration of new concepts into human service programmes, and the modification of development strategies."

The 64-page booklet sets out the key principles governing the education of children and young people with disabilities, and reviews the current provisions being made for them through legislation, administrative measures, early childhood education, schooling and professional development.

The document is available, free of charge, from: UNESCO, ED/BAS/PE, 7, Place de Fontonoy, 75352, Paris 07, France. Fax: (33-1) 40.65.94.05. It is available now in English and Arabic. French, Spanish and Russian versions will be published in early 1994.

●● Half of U.S. adults score low in literacy survey

Some 47 per cent of America's 191 million adults have reading, writing and math skills so limited that they cannot function effectively in the workplace, according to a new report released by the U.S. Department of Education.

Typically, these adults cannot do such simple tasks as fill out a bank deposit slip, translate information from a table to a graph, or find a Saturday departure on a bus schedule.

The study – the most comprehensive study of literacy ever done in the USA – showed that those functioning at the higher literacy skills levels were more likely to be employed, work more weeks in a year and earn higher wages than those with lower level skills.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said he was "disappointed" by the results of the study, but not surprised, given the number of people with low literacy skills who also live in poverty.

According to the study, 90 million adults function at the two lowest proficiency levels, 61 million have middle-level skills, and 34 to 40 million are at the two highest proficiency levels.

Young adults (21 to 25 years old) surveyed showed literacy skills 11 to 14 percentage points lower than those in the same age group taking part in a similar survey in 1985.
(Source: Associated Press)

●● International award for literacy research

The Canadian government has joined hands with UNESCO to offer an international award for the best research in adult literacy in 1993. The author of the award-winning research work will receive a sum of US$10,000 and the manuscript will be published in English, Spanish and French.

Original manuscripts, between 30,000 and 50,000 words, should be submitted to the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) before 31 January 1994; they will be judged by an international jury.
For further information:
International Award for Research in Literacy, UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstr .58, P O Box 13 10 23 D-20110 Hamburg, Germany.
Fax: (49) 40.410.7723,
Tel: (49) 40.44.80.41-0

BOOK NOTES

Russia in darkness

In the form of a "very long open letter" to President Boris Yeltsin, Russian scholar Boris S. Gershunsky examines the critical problems of education from inside post-Communist Russia. He outlines the failures of education during the Soviet regime and details the desperate condition of Russian education today. He also discusses the current neglect of Russian pedagogy and the need for new "human-oriented" priorities in the changing nation.

The author, director of the Institute of Theoretical Pedagogics and International Research, with the Russian Academy of Education in Moscow, includes themes such as: "Economic crisis and its educational and pedagogical component", "Do the state and society appreciate the necessity of the priority development of the education system" and "Philosophy of education: status problems and propects".

Russia in Darkness... On Education and the Future: An Open Letter to President Yeltsin, by Boris S. Gershunsky, San Francisco, Caddo Gap Press, 103 pp 1993. ISBN: 1-880 192-04-7

Educating all the children

Primary schooling is critically important for the achievement of national development, and access to it has been formally accepted as a human right for almost half a century. But it is still far from being universally available. In fact, only about three-quarters of the eligible children attend primary school in developing countries, and many schools offer an education of bad quality.

Educating All the Children explores why such high levels of under-enrolment persists and how the trend could be reversed. It demonstrates that schooling for all could be attained, worldwide, by the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the national reforms required to achieve the goal are demanding. That is why sharp and sustained increases in financial aid – mainly for the poorest countries of Africa and Asia – also will be required. This book identifies the policies which must be followed by the countries of both the North and the South if schooling for all children is to be achieved.

Educating All the Children, by Christopher Colclough with Keith Lewin, published by Clarendon Press, 1993. 352 pp. (ISBN: 0-19-828747-X, paper back: 0-19-828746-1)

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 1993

22-24 October
Angers (France)
Donors to African Education Task Force Meeting: Implementation of education projects and programmes.
>>>>Donors to African Education, 7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris, France,
Fax: 33.1.45.03.39.65

8-10 November
Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
UNESCO/UNICEF meeting on children and adolescents in conflict with the law
>>>>Mr. Alphonse Tay,
Basic Education Division, UNESCO
7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 SP, Paris, France, Fax: 33.1.40.65.94.06

21-25 November
Cairo (Egypt)
International Conference on the State of Education and Development: New Directions
>>>>Dr. Mekki Mtewa, Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research and Development in the Third World, Washington D.C.
Fax: (1) 202.723-7010

29 November-1 December
Paris (France)
Technical Consultation: Providing Basic Learning Materials to Developing Countries
>>>>Mr. Victor Ordonez, Director, Basic Education Division (address above)

6-8 December
Paris (France)
Citizens for Tomorrow: NGO Congress on Basic Education for Democracy, Cultural Identity and Environment.
>>>>Mr. Marc Gilmer, UNESCO, Basic Education Division (address above)

6-10 December
Paris (France)
UNDP/UNESCO Interregional Workshop on the preparation of teacher training packages
>>>>Ms. Winsome Gordon, UNESCO, Basic Education Division (address above)

13-16 December
New Delhi (India)
Education for All Summit of Nine High Population Countries
>>>>Mr. Victor Ordonez, UNESCO, Basic Education Division, (address above)

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